

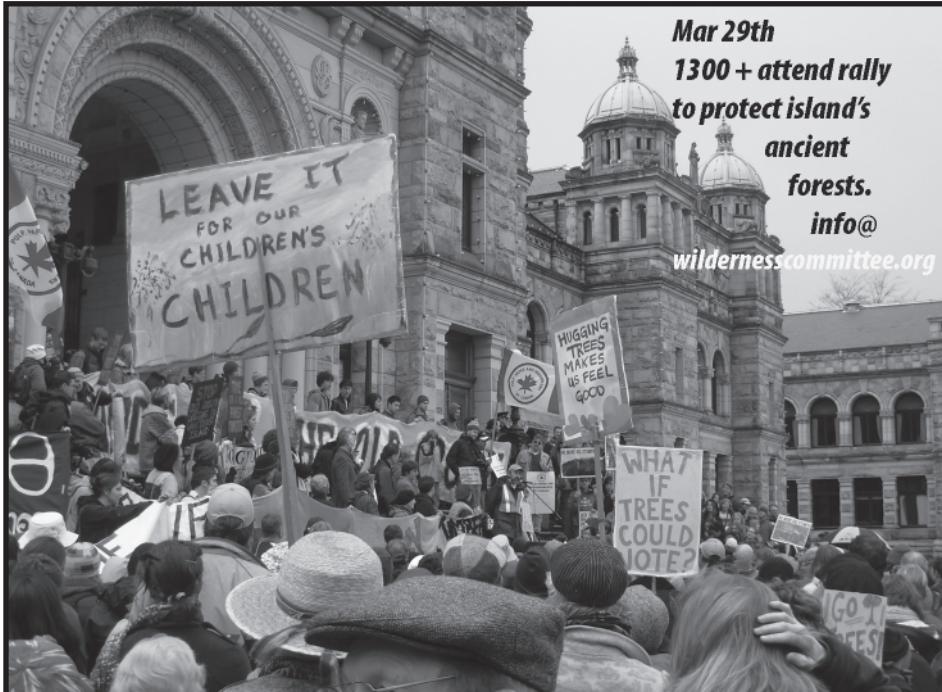


Victoria Street Newz

"All
the
news
that
fits,
we
print"

May 2008

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No. 2



Democracy? or Democratic Oligarchy? *by C'Daoim*

The British North America Act of 1867 (BNA) is the document that founded our country and demonstrates, when compared with today's ideas, that democracy is a constant evolution. Section 84 of the BNA states, in part, "every male British Subject aged Twenty-one Years or upwards, being a householder, shall have a vote" (Dawson and Dawson 154). The words democracy or government by the people are not in the document. First Nations Peoples, women, the poor, the Métis, and non-landowners were not even promised a vote. This is an example of a democratic oligarchy (government by the few). Education,

(in)-equality, laws and rights would be determined by "the few." Yet the roles given to non-voting citizens were already determined to be the workforce. So, is the right to vote the determinative that decides whether or not we are a democracy? Let's suppose for the moment that voting is the only factor required for us to become a democracy. Shamefully the First Nations People didn't get the vote until 1960, so by that determination we have only been a democracy for 48 years. Also we are only a representative democracy, which is a form of democracy but so is a

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Thanks for your support!!

About Street Newz

"Building Bridges
within our Downtown Community"

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We are devoted to a triple bottom line philosophy - concerned about our environmental and social, as well as financial well-being.

You can contribute to social change by supporting the Victoria Street Newz team, by pondering the root causes of poverty, and by working for peaceful, non-violent change.

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INTERNATIONAL AFFILIATION

Victoria Street Newz is a proud member of the North American Street Newspaper Association and the International Network of Street Papers. The mission of NASNA is to support a street newspaper movement that creates and upholds journalistic and ethical standards while promoting self-help and empowerment among people living in poverty. INSP is an umbrella organization that provides a consultancy service for its partner papers, advises new street papers, and supports initiatives for marginalized people. Visit NASNA at www.nasna.org or the INSP at www.street-papers.org.

JUST ANOTHER RANT

i have another life, aside from street newz, and part of it is comprised of extensive email correspondence & newsletters. one day i forwarded an email suggesting that, unless governments are accountable to the public, we ought to withhold taxes. i knew i'd receive some feedback, but i didn't realize how significantly i'd be blasted - from someone who works for a civil servant's union, and from someone looking to be elected. those folks depend on our regular tithing to the government, and they rightly pointed out that tax dollars pay for social programs and schools and libraries and we'd all be a lot worse off without those things.

no argument here. likely, the idea of government is rooted in an honourable attempt to redistribute wealth. but watching the dismantling of social programs, the closure of schools and recently the library, it's clear that government has been usurped - nowadays governments are about protecting corporations from public dissent. maybe a good ol' boston tea party style tax revolt is just what the doctor ordered.

case in point --- the other day i went to a postal outlet to attain a 'publication mail agreement number' (pman), so i can apply for the 'publication assistance program' (pap) so we can defer some of the our postal costs (which increase \$.05 per paper each year). the pharmasave postal clerk conferred with her manager, who informed me that they're just a franchise and can't do that. i thought this was canada post, i said. no, we're part of pharmasave, the nearest canada post is at fort and oak bay avenue. so, i said, they're privatizing the postal service?

oh yes, the manager replied, for the past 15 years. i guess i missed that news report, i said, and asked if they get a federal pension. no, they're pharmasave employees.

WTF????!!!! again, i wonder ... why do we pay taxes? in the first place you can't believe the amount of paperwork i've had to fill out, and submit, to two different branches of the federal government, all of which contains exactly the same information, just to get a break on postal costs. is government so entrenched in bureaucracy that it's just easier to dismantle it and start over? do they make it that way on purpose, so we'll look forward to its demise and the end of our faux democracy?

i know someone who knows someone who works for the ministry of employment and income assistance. apparently he had to contact over 30 people, when he started the job, just to get his office set up. he's getting paid less than the advertised wage for the job, because of some old union agreement. no wonder those front line workers burn out so fast!!

i waffle between believing that government can be reformed from the inside, and thinking we're just better off without it. it's founded in theft and murder, it's patriarchal, hierarchical, and slow as molasses unless you're a lobbyist with lots of money. it subsidizes the enormously profitable oil industry, for heaven's sake, and watches while people die in the streets.

i look forward to my next life, hopeful that there's intelligent life somewhere in the universe, 'cause on days like this i wonder whatever happened to it here on earth.

OPINION

MIDEAST: No Day Is a Woman's Day in Gaza

by Mohammed Omer



GAZA CITY - Mahasen Darduna suffers in ways the world recognises; her suffering comes at the hands of the Israelis. But there are many

Palestinian women whose suffering the world does not see, because their hell is inflicted on them by Palestinians.

One way and another, no day is a woman's day in Gaza.

For all of a week, Mahasen Darduna, 30, has sat day and night by her son's bedside in hospital. The boy, Yahya, 9, was among the group hit by an Israeli missile while playing football on a field at the Jabaliya refugee camp. Yahia

survived, but with severe injuries.

"He needs my support, he has been confined to this bed since he was maimed by the Israeli missile," Mahasen says. But she must also slip away often to see her other five children, who she has moved to her mother-in-law's house in belief they will be safer there.

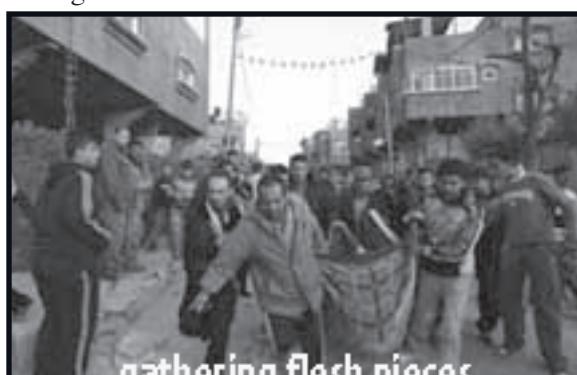
"I think of them constantly when we are apart. I feel terrible: two are getting sick, and they all cry each time we say goodbye. I can't be at both places."

In the same hospital room, Umm Ali Faraj looks after her seven-year-old son, who suffered a cracked skull in a bombing. Umm Ali too has rearranged her family life. Four of her seven children stay with her in the hospital. Umm Ali goes back and forth between hospital and home, cooking for the children and getting them off to school.

Like Mahasen and Umm Ali, countless women have suffered through more than 40 years of Israeli occupation.

"Palestinian women's lives are incredibly difficult under the crippling international siege and the Israeli army's killing invasions," says Nadyia Abu Nahla, director of the Women's Affairs Technical Centre in Gaza, an independent group that supports women's rights.

The large number of women who have been forced to give birth at army checkpoints is well documented by international



and Israeli rights groups. Israel's policy of demolishing Palestinian homes has collectively punished tens of thousands of women in Gaza and the West Bank, rendering them and their children homeless.

But through this period, women have also struggled against denial of rights by Palestinian society.

"The dire economic situation is one of the causes of an increase of violence in Gaza," Abu Nahla told IPS. With resistance to the siege and military attacks, religious fanaticism has grown, and that has contributed to an increase in violence against women, she said.

"Islam forbids violence against women, and forbids the use of women as slaves," says Sheikh Dr. Hassan al-Jojo, head of Gaza's Legitimacy Court, the main court for society and family issues. But Dr. Jojo acknowledges that women do not have their full rights.

'Honour killing' has increased, according to Abu Nahla. At least 17 women died in 'honour killings' in Gaza last year, her centre reports. Last year and 2003 have been the worst

years for known 'honour killings' in Gaza. In 2003, 34 women were killed in Gaza and the West Bank.

Jordanian criminal law enforced in the West Bank, and Egyptian law enforced in Gaza, neither effectively prohibit nor appropriately punish violence against women. Women are rarely encouraged to go to the courts, or to seek the help of social services for rehabilitation.

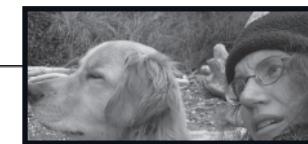
Police chief investigator Mussa Dawoud told IPS that violence against women is taken seriously. But in trying to solve problems, he says the police try to protect the family structure, and avoid complications that could lead to divorce.

Police officers and clan seniors routinely mediate to resolve issues around family violence, but provide solutions that usually mean that the abused woman is sent back to her husband. Where women receive support to take a strong stand, they face pressure and punishment from abusive men.

One 29-year-old woman from Khan Younies is not allowed by her husband to use the phone or even send an sms, says Abu Nahla. She is locked up at home daily, and on one occasion could not take her sick child to hospital. Other women have been beaten up by husbands for visiting relatives without their permission, Abu Nahla said.

Only 13 percent of Palestinian Legislative Council members are women, with fewer holding leading positions. "This is not enough," Abu Nahla said. "We are hoping there will be more seats for women." And, she said, that there will be safety at home in every way.

Mohammed Omer is a student living in Rafah. His website contains photos and reports about his home town - "about our life, our community, the home demolitions, homeless families, the children in our camp... about the tragedies that happen here every day." www.rafahtoday.org



by Janine Bandcroft

Why a War on the Poor?

by Mumia Abu-Jamal ©
February 18, 1998

"The Rich rob the poor and the poor rob each other."
Sojourner Truth

If one examines social, political and economic policy in the '90s, an unmistakable picture emerges of the poor as people who are despised for their very poverty, and punished for their lack of wealth. The state, and their cultural elite project this picture until it permeates political and popular culture, and is reflected in public policy.

Why did the government launch its attack on the welfare system? What was behind its rhetoric?

If you analyze it closely, you'll find the push for this policy came from American Business. Here's why: The "business cycle" is crucial to capitalists economies. This is also known as the recurrent tendency of economic "boom and bust" periods. Back in 1958, an economist noted that when unemployment rises, wages fall (this is known as the "Phillips Curve"). This is so because when most workers are employed, business is pressed to react to wage demands. However, when there is significant unemployment, business knows they can find labor at lower wages. Thus, unemployment drives down wages for all workers, as it increases job security.

What does this have to do with welfare?

Well, welfare is a form of income maintenance, and as such it served as a buffer between the employed and the unemployed. Therefore, workers were not desperate for any job that they could find. When workers are not desperate, when they have security, they demand higher wages from capital. Who would've thought that the poorest among us, those on welfare, strengthened and stabilized the wages of workers?

It's for this reason that capital launched its attack on income maintenance programs through its political agents (Republicans and Democrats), using the sleight-of-hand label of "welfare reform." Both parties of big business joined hands in the battle against the poorest, egged on by big business media conglomerates, who are but subsidiaries of even bigger businesses. This interests of capital can be summed up in one word: capital.

Why do you think every time news comes out about low unemployment Wall Street panics and stocks tumble?

When masses of people are unemployed that's called "good for business!" How can bad for people be good for business? So, what is to be done?

Several weeks ago, French unemployed took to the streets nationally, rocking the Neoliberal establishment with a wave of militant demonstrations. This remarkable mobilization showed the power of a movement of unemployed, that beat back the state's attempts to cut back on French income maintenance programs. That movement leaped across the border to Germany, where marches sprung up in over 200 cities.

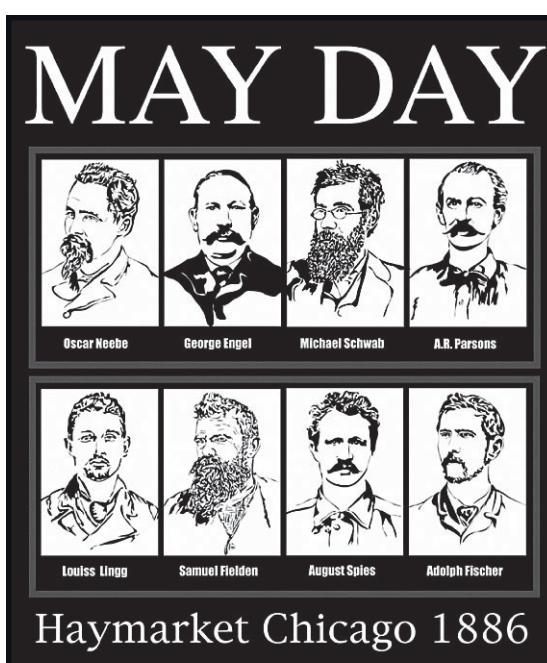
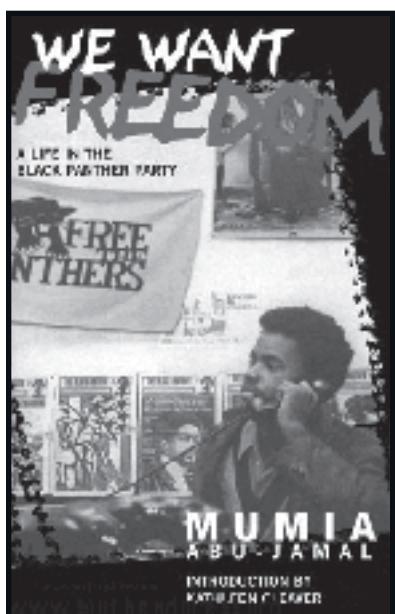
We can learn from the French who did not hesitate to organize and mobilize the poor and unemployed. The slogan of the French may not translate well to us here, but it bears repeating: "Who sows misery reaps rage."

The politicians ain't the solution - the people are.

Let us organize.

Mumia Abu-Jamal is a renowned journalist from Philadelphia who has been in prison since 1981 and on death row since 1983 for allegedly shooting Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner. He is known as the "Voice of the Voiceless" for his award-winning reporting on police brutality and other social and racial epidemics that plague communities of color in Philadelphia and throughout the world.

Mumia has received international support over the years in his efforts to overturn his unjust conviction. His book, We Want Freedom: A Life in the Black Panther Party, is available at www.southendpress.org.



On Democracy
... continued from cover page

democratic oligarchy and our ancestors found that unacceptable, partly because of inequality, poverty and not having any "rights" to have a say in the direction of the country's development. So the next question becomes does a representative democracy demonstrate that it has the ability to solve the problems that could not be addressed by a democratic oligarchy?

In the case of poverty, the answer seems to be "no." The tendency appears to be to blame the poor and working poor for their situation, which is a remnant from the days of the democratic oligarchy. Social evolution has passed that point. It would appear that the only choice we have is to participate in an unfettered capitalist system, which has shown itself to become corrupt; freedom is defined as being able to criticize it. What about good people who are struggling to make ends meet? What is created for the majority of citizens who need affordable housing while corporations reap huge profits from our natural resources? And what about new problems that the country faces such as environmental destruction as a means to economic growth?"

As for inequality, there are lots of examples of that, but let's look at the fact that politicians believe they cannot live a comfortable lifestyle for themselves and their families on approximately a hundred thousand dollars a year, while they assign a minimum wage to the rest of us. Does this imply that in a representative democracy we still fill roles for them, as we did in a democratic oligarchy?

We have also passed the point of arguing over whether the planet is falling apart because of the direction our leaders have taken us down. It is. Yet we still see terms such as "activists" put on citizens that care enough to attempt to stop the destruction of our planet. Our politicians and their corporate friends are "non-sustainability activists" and we have no say in making them stop. We are allowed to decide by election which "non-sustainability activist" we wish to put in control of the destruction, but this isn't helping our species, and every other species for that matter, so it can't be good governance.

Possibly the time for the next evolution in democracy is upon us. The problem is that while this is a proven occurrence in the democratic progression of our country, nobody has been working on the necessary steps to put government in the hands of the people. Is this "lack of foresight" again? History demonstrates that people have had to demand the change that we deserve. Have we not learned by now that the governing of our affairs is an ever-changing process, not a static destination?

We need educated people, not indoctrinated people, and yet the cuts in education are rampant. After 141 years as a nation, all levels of education should be free for everyone, if we want to be a democracy.

Social justice is another pillar of democracy and should involve the citizens that it creates the laws for, in the decision making process of what is just and fair. We have just witnessed the police raid our environmentally concerned citizens working in Langford. Yet the presidents of corporations that are destroying our planet, "the leaders of the non-sustainability activists," are never raided for their crimes against OUR planet, and our elected leaders support this. So are we suggesting that the idea of stopping the destruction of the planet is a crime and protecting the "non-sustainability activists" is justice?

As it presently stands, we have all been assimilated into a plan that really doesn't include us; it just uses us to achieve the goals of "the few," which is actually a democratic oligarchy.

Become informed...Society needs you.

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My Lai Massacre 40th Anniversary: What Have We Learned?

by Bo Filter

March 16th marked the 40th anniversary of the My Lai massacre in Vietnam. For those too young to remember, over 500 unarmed women, children and babies were sent into a ditch to be executed in cold blood. Lt. William Calley, charged with the murder of 109 of the victims, stated in his defense at trial that he had been taught to hate all Vietnamese, even children. Indoctrinating soldiers to hate and garnering public support for that hatred is a crucial factor in waging wars of aggression in other lands. Inventing hatred for the Vietnamese began in 1954 with top U.S. officials. Allen Dulles and his brother, John Foster, estimated that eight years of steady media propaganda would be needed to turn the American people against Vietnam. It worked.

After World War II, the American elite took the reigns of power from the 3rd Reich and began their own march towards world domination. U.S. expansionists learned a lot from Hitler's propaganda machine. A German guard who worked at Auschwitz shot to death hundreds of prisoners after they were ordered into trenches. When questioned about the killings he said he felt nothing but hatred. When asked if he felt any remorse for shooting the children and babies he said "no ... they would just grow up to be Jews and Communists like their parents."

When it came time to attack Vietnam, soldiers were honored to kill "Commie Gooks." In boot camp they learned that Vietnamese were little yellow people too sub-human to be allowed to live. The British aristocrats exterminated the Tasmanians using the same "logic."

Records revealed that atrocities against these "sub-human" people were carried out more often than the public imagined. For example, war interrogator Lt. Jon Drolshagan described one of their "normal things": "The major that I worked for had a fantastic capability of staking prisoners, utilizing a knife that was extremely sharp, and sort of filleting them like a fish. You know, trying to check out how much bacon he could make of a Vietnamese body to get information."

From a deeper perspective, filleting prisoners is not new. When the Spaniards arrived on the continent in 1942, they soon found themselves filleting the kindest and most gentle people they had ever met, which Columbus wrote about in his log—the Arawak "Indians." The idea was to extract information about where to find gold, something the natives knew nothing about. The Arawak were wiped out, deemed too low to own and live on their own land. Read about it yourself in Howard Zinn's "The People's History of the United States."

Keeping horrific practices like filleting and atrocities like My Lai out of the public eye worked to maintain American support for the illegal war. When Lt. Calley was convicted, reaction was swift. A White House poll revealed that 78 percent of respondents disagreed with Calley's conviction and life sentence. Within 24 hours the White House received 100,000 telegrams, calls, and letters—100 to one demanding Calley's release. At a revival in Columbus, Georgia, Rev. Michael Lord pronounced, "There was a crucifixion 2,000 years ago of a man named Jesus Christ. I don't think we need another crucifixion of [a] man named Rusty Calley." Mormon Timmy Poppleton wrote his senator asking him to intervene: "I'm only eight years old, but I know that Lieut. Calley was defending our freedoms against Communism."

How could little Timmy parrot boot camp anti-Communist rhetoric without being exposed to it by his parents and yet know nothing about the U.S. elitists' plan for world domination by launching a cold war, using anti-communism as their pretext? Mind-control works. See National Security Memorandum 68, which launched the Cold War against the U.S.S.R.

Keeping blinders on the public requires a systemic censorship and cover-up program, as practiced by the Pentagon in their PsyOps (psychological operations) program, also called Black Ops, psychological warfare targeting the public. In '06 Nicholas Turse, at Columbia University, found through declassified documents that US military investigators had verified 320 reports of atrocities committed by US troops in Vietnam. At the time, another 500 reports were yet to be corroborated. The joint corporation-Pentagon-controlled media, in the normal function of PsyOps, censored these findings. The public needs to realize that uncensored news is available through alternative media.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SINCE MY LAI?

Lt. Calley was let go after serving four months of a life sentence. No one was tried for the many other atrocities. The U.S. aggression never really ended. Children are still being born with deformities brought on by the residues of chemical warfare Agent Orange, sprayed across Vietnam with the intent of poisoning the land for generations. Landmines continue to detonate on a regular basis, killing and maiming adults and children alike.

We learned that carpet bombing huge areas of Vietnam in order to kill thousands of people belied the excuse that massacres are an anomaly in war, rather than the staple trade of all is fair in war. Since Vietnam the U.S. has carpet bombed Iraq, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, and Iraq again. See the 2001 televised documentary, "INSIDE THE KILL BOX: Fighting the Gulf War, produced by Discovery Channel. In the film George H.W. Bush and Dick Cheney make perfectly clear that invading Iraq and building permanent bases there had everything to do with oil and control of world resources. When Cheney's energy task force was forced to give up to the public his secret documents on Iraq, they revealed maps of the oil fields and repartitioning of Iraq to facilitate the shipping of oil to western ports, profiting the immensely rich U.S. oil corporations of which the Bush administration serves. The corporate media tried to hide this too. The revelation damaged the image of the Cheney coterie as super patriot flower children spreading love and freedom, instead of the usual bully nation pirating smaller nation resources.

We have learned since Vietnam that the same warmonger corporations are running the show, what Mussolini called corporatism rather than fascism.

Both terms refer to the marriage of corporations to the military to create a military state. Corporatism or fascism, the U.S. is a one-party military state with their first and second team

Republicans and Democrats providing a thin veneer of democracy.

The '06 election provided a glaring example of exposing this veneer. The public voted for the Democrats with a mandate to impeach Bush and Cheney. The first chore of leading Democrat Nancy Pelosi was to take impeachment off the table. According to many critics, impeachment is the only tool left to stop the imminent slide to the political bottom—Naziism, where SS thugs roam the streets.

For the 2008 presidential contenders the fascists or corporatists field second team Democrats Clinton or Obama, who are anxious to serve their bosses by venturing in to another illegal war of aggression, this time against Iran—more oil to be had. For the first team Republicans, they offer an old stalwart, Senator John McCain, who many of you may not remember wanted to "nuke the gooks" in Vietnam. He's chomping on the bit to attack Iran.

The excuse of keeping nuclear out of Iran is too hypocritical to be working well so another attack on the U.S. blamed on Iran would probably galvanize public sentiment. In fact, Captain Eric H. May expects a 9/11 copycat false flag operation this summer as a pretext to blame on Iran. Three U.S. cities are targeted. The primary target is Houston, followed by Chicago then Portland. Read Captain May's research at: www.thepriceofliberty.org/08/02/25/may.htm False flag operations are always primed to prepare the public to direct their hatred against the alleged perpetrators. Here is the un-elected President George W. Bush on Feb. 13, 2008 priming the pump for aggression:

"Good morning. At this moment, somewhere in the world, terrorists are planning new attacks on our country. Their goal is to bring destruction to our shores that will make September the 11th pale by comparison."

After the "terrorist attack" we will see young men from the poorest communities of America sent to Iran to fight the "evil terrorists." When massacres occur in Iran, as a matter of course, another "My Lai" may be exposed, and again reactionary Americans will come to the rescue and save the face of America as a peace loving nation that just can't seem to keep its troops out of other nations, currently having bases in over 130 countries.

When criminally minded aristocrats mock freedom and democracy by training young men to become mass murderers in foreign lands and then hold them up as poster-boy national heroes, any pretense of moral goodness is lost. America is lost. In Canada, conservative governments are taking us along for the ride to final ruin by illegally conscripting Canadians into U.S. wars of aggression.

Since Vietnam the U.S. march towards world domination has intensified. The U.S. elite runs a global gang of hoods called NATO; Canada has joined against the will of many Canadians. Countries must sacrifice their economies to U.S. corporations to join NATO, or suffer the consequences like Yugoslavia who resisted and was bombed, with depleted uranium, for 78 days and nights.

The final dominoes are in sight. Countries who have not joined are labeled terrorist states. As the dominoes fall, they magically become havens of democracy in the corporate media. Astute readers of history know that the domino theory of the Cold War, that Russia was trying to take over the world, was not just a hoax but also a perfect cover for the exact domino plan of western business interests. National Security Memorandum 68 was secret to the American public to hide a U.S. domino plan for world hegemony.

All the associated horrific warmongering and murder over the years has been waged outside the average person's knowledge scale of understanding crime and moral degeneration. Worse, mind-control techniques have made far too many North Americans lose sight of the most basic truth and most important international moral imperative: aggression is something you do in other countries; defense is something you do in your own country.

To help expose the warmongers, share articles with others. Ask your favorite web news outlets to run articles that shed light on political aggression. Access this article in electronic form at: www.globaljusticepublishing.com.

Bo Filter is an independent social science researcher and author of [The Cause of Wars and Aggression: Book 1](#).

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**support
the
troops:
bring
them
home.**

LETTERZ

Janine,

You have changed too much since we last communicating. and may live to regret it.

There are more people killed daily in Darfur, Congo and now in occupied Tibet. These people get no help and no sympathy and have no choice. All Hamas has to do is stop the random killing of civilians by launching a daily barrage of rockets. Yet you consider them victims of a Holocaust. Jews lost 40% of their population. This is a proper use of the word HOLOCAUST.

I escaped the Holocaust by several years, lost all of my family in Europe and fear that another Holocaust, on an even larger scale, including a more diverse cast of victims, is on the Horizon.

The Arab population is undergoing a massive explosion and a lot more of them are killed in fraternal fighting fighting between Hamas and Fatah, or Shia vs Sunni, to say nothing about women lost in "honor killings."

I agree with regrets that it's best to remove me from your mailing list.

I challenge you to publish this letter in your Street Newz.

Have a good life,
Max Yas, Victoria

Thanks to all of you at Street Newz !

You're doing a great service by informing on issues that are ignored, by-passed, even lied about by 'mainstream' reporting. Please continue ... we need YOU!

Labelling separates us and we can all learn from the biblical advice: "Whatsoever you do unto my brethren, you do unto me." We learn from each other - as aren't we all One on this earth?

Keep up the fine work, my brothers and sisters. I'll close with a Zen chant:

"No coming, no going.
No after, no before
I hold you close to me.
I release you to be so free
For I am in you and you are in me."

Namaste,

Mimi O'Tway (an elder peacenik)

The way our Provincial government improving our lives

It was in January when I did receive my Welfare supplement that I did realised that Welfare did send me less than twenty dollars what was my usual check last year.

Abviously I did call Welfare emideatly and I was told that this was because every January there is increase in CPP benefits.

So wait a minute.

Then on one side government give you few bucks to improve your standart of living.
So they can take it away from you on other side and you would be there were you were before.

What kind of improvement is it ?

Miroslav Vlcek, Vancouver



What's the Motive?

I have noticed that I don't have to dig deep to find discrepancies in the Mayor's plan. They are totally overlooking the initial cause of our homeless problem. Housing is cool, but medical and therapeutic treatment is needed as well as other major supports. I have doubts on how far the city is willing to go to help these people. I know what it is like to be in that position. You need a lot of support which a lot of these people do not have. Mental illness and addiction recovery doesn't happen just because you have a home or a 5 year time slot to get better. It takes a lifetime of determination and hard work to become healthy again.

Extensive support in life skills and rehabilitation is necessary. By the way things look, the Mayor's idea of support is hiring 19 more police. The city still has not learned that these are medical conditions at no fault of their own. You cannot cure the problem with guns and batons. If the city put their money into medical interventions, there would be a significant decrease for the need of police. Imagine spending \$9.2 million in a 40 month period for policing 320 people. Victoria did it. Put that money in detox and counseling and see what happens.

The city is in a big push to clean up the streets. I do wonder if their intentions are for the all mighty dollar, or is it for humanity. In the next few years, we will have a lot of visitors in our province making preparations for the 2010 Winter Olympic Games. Those visitors will have fat wallets and I only assume that the city wants a clean image for the tourists coming across by boat. The city knew for decades we had problems and never dealt with it until now. All of the sudden the #@*# is hitting the fan.

Patrick Scherch
www.scherchpj.com/blogs

Needle Exchange Saves Lives

Victoria's only fixed site Needle Exchange is set for eviction May 31st, 2008, but where has it to go? As of yet, nobody has the answer.

With the end of May fast approaching, this is an issue the City of Victoria, VIHA, and the citizens of Victoria need to deal with. Needle Exchanges have been noted world wide for the effectiveness of their services. People who access needle exchanges can reduce the risk of contracting and transmitting HIV, HEP B & C, and can obtain extra information about ways to maximize their health. A needle exchange bridges the gap between injection drug users and other social services.

The benefit to the public can be seen through

a cost/benefit analysis – it's cheaper to prevent HIV, HEP B & C, and other blood borne diseases than it is to treat them. Nonetheless, we can't ignore the basic human right of people to access health care. The needle exchange also collects and safely disposes of used needles of any type. It does not make sense for the city to lose such a keystone service, especially with the prominent issue of addiction the city is facing.

If the needle exchange can't go into the St. John's Ambulance building, another site needs to be located. It is not fair to jeopardize the health of the community because people aren't comfortable with the issues a needle exchange addresses.

A group of Victoria residents are taking a stand on this issue, and urging community members to put pressure on the City and VIHA to secure a fixed site for the exchange and work towards the establishment of a safe injection site. If you would like to support the needle exchange contact victoria.harmreduction@gmail.com, or sign the petition at www.ipetitions.com/petition/victoriabneedleexchange.

Hollie Ann Johnson, Victoria



Red Again

I'm not a big fan of writing about myself. But for this letter I want to say something straight.



First of all, it's about all the fuss about my being an aggressive panhandler. In my own defense, I personally feel that I'm about as friendly and polite as a person could be. I like to meet people of all walks. Any race, no matter their age. I imagine going to their place of origin, there are many ways of living. I know I will never be able to visit them, but it's nice to dream or wish.

Now about all the articles, tv attention, newspapers, photos, etc., some of which you read watch or listen about what I do or say. Some make some over the top comments that have no proof but people will believe because they make it more exciting than it really is. But for me, who cares as long as I know what the thing is about.

I'm just trying my best to live and let live. So if you happen to see or talk with me, please try to remember the old saying -- try walking a mile in my shoes.

That's me, Red.

Unnecessary Deaths

Sad as it is that four sealers have died, we should keep in mind that many more people die every year in the construction, farming and trucking industries.

The construction industry, also seasonal, has the highest rate of injury and death. The difference is that the latter don't receive the media attention that the sealers have received.

Yes the sealers were just trying to supplement their earnings, but they do so in a way that is violent, bloody and deadly. Their deaths were 'unnecessary' and one could argue that if you live a violent lifestyle you could expect to die in the same manner.

The millions, though the exact cost is not available, wasted every year by the Government of Canada to monitor and defend this archaic practice, would better have been invested in subsidising sealers not to seal. In that case the four sealers would be home and safe now.



Georges R. Dupras, Saint Laurent (Montréal)

HA... HA... HArper: But The Joke's On Us

by George Simich

As per usual, the Bush-light, Stevie Boy Conservatives prostrated themselves at the bloodied alter of Reaganomics. As they substantially increased military spending in their latest budget, the Cons reduced their revenues, setting the stage for future cuts to our social programs.

Like good old Georgie-boy Bush, who confronted the perplexing problem of huge budget surpluses, Stevie-boy quickly achieved the neo-con objective of perpetually hobbling our government's capacity to fund anything but the military and national security. A dedicated Bushite and President of Americans for Tax Reform, Grover Norquist spoke volumes for our Stevie-boy when he said, "My goal is to cut government in half in 25 years, to get it down to the size where we can drown in a bathtub."

By 2012-13, previously announced tax cuts will create an annual reduction of federal revenue of \$40.2B. Typically, this tax-free savings plan, the centrepiece of the February budget, also erodes revenue, through its compounding effects. In twenty years this plan reduces federal revenue an additional \$3B annually. If ten percent of the people control ninety percent of the wealth, then we must presume with some confidence that of this total \$43.2B, \$38.8B will predominately accrue to our wealthiest citizens and our largest corporations.

The homeless and the poor get nothing. In fact, this very money, these ridiculous cuts, could address the poverty and social housing crisis that we have in this country. The homeless, the poor, the working poor, the working class, the lower middle class, and the middle-middle class will remain heavily indebted; these economic groups have very little capacity to save, so we cannot benefit from this plan. Canadians owe, on average, \$1.05 for every \$1.00 that we earn, so where is the capacity to save for our economic strata.

National childcare, subsidized housing for the estimated 250,000 Canadians living on our streets, and pharmacare will become the melancholic memories of mystery cults—fanciful flights and languishing legends. Taking careful aim, Stevie-boy fixed his sight on revenues as a percent of GDP, dropping them to levels that existed before the establishment of key social programs, so these programs, too, will most certainly disappear or merely become the phantoms of them.

For his total \$140B wealth transfer in the form of tax cuts to Canada's wealthiest citizens and corporations over the life of current, Con legislation, Stevie-boy received the Distinguished Canadian Award from the Economic Club of Toronto on March 07, 2008—from those very same wealthy beneficiaries of Stevie-boy's largesse.

Tom Flanagan, Stevie-boy's former Chief of Staff, praised the Con government for pulling off "quite a performance." Stevie-boy achieved radical change without ever tipping his hand, Flanagan averred; well, except to the Canadians, who rightly remembered the Reform/Alliance version of this Truth and the economic/social ideology of fence-Alberta wing nuts. We knew this was coming.

Unfortunately, the Cons bought the scions with our money and the simpletons with theirs. Sadly, memories are often short and unreliable, so thirty-six percent of the sixty-one percent of Canadians who voted—the laissez faire loaded and the comfy cloud-niners—confusedly elected these Cons. We did not vote for this "Confederacy of Dunces"; however, five and a half million dandies and dolts did.

In his comments to The Tyee, Anthony

Scanlon said, "There was nothing in the budget for working parents or the homeless. But if you were sitting in the offices of the Department of Defence, you'd be pretty happy."

In a February 21st speech to a military lobby group, the Conference of Defence Associations (CDA), Harper exclaimed how pleased he was that the Libs had agreed "we should prolong the mission until 2011 and we should leave operational decisions up to our military commanders, who are on-site in Afghanistan."

Stevie-boy promised the CDA, which received \$500,000 in taxpayers' money last year, that, by 2011, military spending will increase 2% each year. These increases are in addition to the ludicrous amount DND has already received. The Rideau Institute estimated that military spending increased by 9% (\$18.24B) over the previous year. In inflation-adjusted dollars, that is more than it was during our turf war with the Soviets. In 2008-09, military spending rises an additional \$1.16B, and Canada will ascend to the sixth rung on the ladder among the twenty-six NATO members.

Why? Where is the threat? Terrorism? Currently, we address terrorism through Intelligence and policing, not helicopters and tanks. What menace to Canadian security is Stevie-boy anticipating in 2011? As Canadian troops supposedly withdraw from Kandahar, what role is this muscled military expected to play? And where will it play.

Stevie-boy postulated, while most Canadians yearn for a return to peacekeeping — a tradition now all but abandoned — his government, not our government, has planned for a different military policy. Canada's future "peace" missions will involve "the robust use of force," requiring "a strong, modern, multi-faceted military" backed by the political will to deploy — to Iraq for example. Given the ridiculous costs of a state-of-the-art military, Stevie-boy's plan is a recipe for financial disaster brought about by national bean counters, not international terrorists.

Stevie-boy even drew on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to justify his militarization policies. According to Just Foreign Policy and the Information Clearing House, more than 1 million Iraqis have died because of this five-year debacle. Eighty-one Canadians have died in Afghanistan, but how many Afghans have died — and what about their rights? What rights are the millions of refugees and wounded enjoying at this moment? For Stevie-boy, up is down, black is white, and war is peace.

Stevie-boy once said it was a "serious mistake" that Canada refrained from participating in the US criminal attack on Iraq. However, according to the Cons, Liberal neglect of the military had rendered it incapable of playing a role. Increased military expenditures correct this deficiency; Canada will be ready for the US' next illegal invasion of Iran, North Korea, Columbia, Nicaragua, Panama, Granada, or Guatemala. Canadians will get a piece of these actions as we help the US spread democracy to Iran or the Philippines or Sudan or Chile. Moreover, good old Stevie-boy "accomplished" all this with a minority government and an ineffective opposition; what would he do to us with a majority? Time to tell Stevie-boy that we are not amused.

George Simich (thegreenknight.wordpress.com) is a sceptical observer of the farce that is life. He lives in Nanaimo, writing and painting, while striving to convince others that we are obliged to ensure that everyone, with no exceptions, enjoys equal human rights and social justice.

The Advocate: Demythologizing Poverty

By W. Robert Arnold



There is a myth that poor people are lazy and that they are poor as a result. This is most certainly a myth because poor people are no more or less lazy than any other segment of the population. I am sure there are rich people who are lazy from time to time. When you think about it this myth is really ludicrous. Poor people are often actually as busy as or busier than anyone else.

Firstly I would like to redefine the word lazy. I had to do this a few years ago because people kept calling me lazy. I knew I wasn't being lazy. I just wasn't doing what they wanted me to do because I didn't want to. So I came up with a new definition for the word. Lazy is a word we call people who don't have too much trouble not doing what they don't want to do. That is my definition of the word.

So what do poor people do? They do most of the same things that everyone else does including, in many cases, going to work and earning money. There are many people with full-time jobs who are still poor, and many too poor to afford both rent and a healthy diet for them and their families.

Many university students are poor and you can bet that they won't be lazy especially when the exam time is rolling around or when essays and projects are due. Most of them will end up with debts that will keep them poor for years after they leave university for the workaday world. Hopefully, they will be able to find decent jobs in their chosen fields and be able to make a decent living. I suspect that there may be a bigger element of luck involved in that scenario than any of them would like to admit. I do know poor people who have degrees.

Another large segment of poor people is single mothers. They have to get up and get the kids off to school the same as middle-class moms. They too have laundries to do and cleaning and food preparation and shopping and all the rest of the many tasks that mothers do. Raising children in poverty is even more work than raising children with enough money. Having to go to food banks, for instance, is every bit as much work and more humiliating in some situations than being able to do your shopping at your local super market. Finding secondhand clothing that is suitable for your family is more work than going to one store where staff can easily find what you need.

Many seniors are poor, especially older women who have not been in the workforce for many years and must get by on their old-age security and guaranteed income supplement check for the month. These women have not paid into the Canada pension plan so are not eligible for much in the way of payments. These people are not lazy either. They have their groceries to buy and their clothing to provide. They have their doctor's appointments to attend and many volunteer in the community.

Younger healthy men can also be poor from time to time. When they are out of work they are looking for work and when they are working they may still be poor because they will be in entry-level jobs that may only pay six dollars per hour. Looking for work may be the hardest job of all. I know it can be one of the most frustrating and maddening experiences in a young person's life. It certainly was in mine.

Because welfare is just not enough to live on many people on it have to augment their income by collecting bottles, dumpster diving for food and sometimes by less than legal means. One cannot afford to be lazy when he or she doesn't have enough money to get a place to sleep or food to eat. Most people who are homeless spend their days trying to get enough to survive.

So why do we call people who don't have a nine to five well paying job lazy? I think it is because the person who is working is firstly working at a job that they don't like very much and secondly fantasizing sometimes about what they would do if they didn't have the job. This is a fantasy about taking it easy, doing the kinds of things we like to do in our spare time and, in fact, being lazy.

We think about having a holiday if we're not working. But people who aren't working for a longer period than two weeks or one month are not having a holiday. They are desperately poor. They are feeling badly about themselves and suffering from a lack of self-esteem in many cases. They are called names and looked down upon by people in society. They are often hungry, depressed and physically ill.

Pundits and politicians are always talking about the causes of poverty. The real cause of poverty is a government that won't legislate sharing the wealth of the country. Laziness is not a cause of anyone's poverty.

Being poor and out of work is no holiday. People who are poor and out of work cannot afford to be lazy like people on holiday. This is the reality.

Robert is a 65 year old man who has fought poverty, his own and others, for over 45 years. He is President of the National Anti Poverty Organization, where he helps the voices of poor people be heard in the halls of power.

Toronto The Good

by cyann ray

It's my hometown and I enjoyed the 30+ years I spent there. I have been living in Victoria for the past eighteen years and have no intentions of ever moving back east.

Like all big cities, Toronto is noisy, crowded and polluted. The summers are unbearably hot and the winters last way too long. The only things I miss about Hogtown are my friends and the T.T.C. (public transit). Still, I resent the negative perception of Toronto so obvious west of the Rockies. A recent trip to the Big Smoke reminded me of what's good about Toronto. And what's wrong with Victoria.

Traffic. For a relatively small town, Victoria's driving population is huge and problematic. Lack of skill or patience or a reluctance to share the road makes travelling in this city dangerous.

By comparison, I witnessed no road rage in Toronto. Considering they have far more traffic, the amount of skill and patience was impressive. Drivers not only stopped at crosswalks, but calmly yielded to jaywalkers, even those on Yonge Street (the main downtown artery). I was shocked. Pedestrians using crosswalks here do so at great risk. Victoria drivers seem unaware of the law requiring them to stop at crosswalks.

One thing that Victoria has that Toronto doesn't is parking. As a cyclist, I see this as a plus for any big city. Difficulty parking would make folks think twice before taking the car. Victoria has loads of parking encouraging everyone to drive.

Of course, adequate alternatives to driving must exist in order to get people out of their pollution-mobiles. With the exception of the Galloping Goose, Victoria seriously fails the grade on this issue. While there are bike lanes, not all drivers acknowledge them and not everyone is a cyclist. What really sets Toronto ahead in the transportation game is the T.T.C. Efficient, massive and affordable public transit is the key to reducing traffic and pollution.

From the airport I waited all of three minutes for a bus that cost me \$2.50 and took me (with the help of the subway and streetcar at no extra cost), right downtown, just a stone's throw from my friend's house. It was an enjoyable trip down memory lane... little has changed in 50 yrs. How responsible of the city not to waste money on needless renovations (or unnecessary art). The public transportation system in Toronto was built to last decades ago and is properly maintained.

But the buses in Victoria, even the shiny new ones, are so inadequate I'm certain they're the main reason why everyone seems to drive here. Schedules are a joke and provide only a ballpark time in which the bus is supposed to arrive. On many routes, riders have a choice between arriving ten minutes late or an hour early for their destination. And good luck if you need to get anywhere at night or on a Sunday.

The difference in driving attitudes and abilities between Toronto and Victoria are noteworthy, as is the availability of public transit. Considering the beauty and size of this island community, I'm puzzled why every 16 yr. old is driving instead of cycling. I also can't understand the aggressive nature of drivers on our roads. What sense does it make to race towards the next red light or stop sign? Just as puzzling is how folks handle the crowds in Toronto. Bumper to bumper traffic is commonplace during daily rush hours yet things seem to run smoothly.

As teenagers in the 70s, none of us drove. And none of us got driven either. We were lucky to have grown up with the independence provided by using our bikes or hopping onto a streetcar. What is it about this Garden City mentality that invites everyone from sixteen to ninety to own a car?

Another thing I noticed during my week in Toronto...no stench of tobacco in the air. Despite the most stringent anti-smoking laws in the country, Victoria remains one big, stinky ashtray. You can't walk two blocks downtown without bumping into a smoker surrounded by a poisonous cloud.

I DO believe that I am living on an island paradise but we certainly could improve the safety on our roads, the quality of our air and the attitudes of some of our people. Toronto may be seen as a world class city but it's no paradise. And Victoria may be known as the Garden City, but it frequently stinks. Perhaps no city is completely ideal. I'm just tired of hearing trash about my hometown, especially by those living in glass (over-priced!) houses.



Barely Managing

by Brian Mason



Our civilisation's attitude can be summed up in eight words. Eight words that tell us everything we need to know about ourselves and our predicament: "we must do a better job of managing" As in we must do a better job of managing the forests, the oceans and wildlife, or be better at managing rivers and wetlands. Any part of the biosphere will do as well to complete the sentence.

Ever since we discovered agriculture and left behind our gatherer-hunter days – picking up religion and civilisation in the process – we've assumed we had the right, the might and the intellect to manage the world around us. This attitude started civilisation on a roller-coaster ride which is only now running out of track. And it's been industrial capitalism greasing the wheels during the last two hundred years of mayhem.

Managing anything, be they workers or the biosphere, implies you have responsibility for it, that you, in some sense, possess or control it. All those MBA programs in universities have been doing an admirable job of hammering home what management consists of: The marshaling and manipulation (read exploitation and domination) of resources for financial gain.

I remember hearing the then NDP forests critic speak at an ancient forests rally on the grounds of the legislature a few years ago. He repeatedly stressed the need to do a better job of managing the forests (better than the governing Liberals, presumably). Of course, he meant managing them better for the benefit of loggers and logging companies, so the latter could earn higher profits. Like so many others, he had fallen into the trap of assuming that Earth is there to be managed by humans, that it's all just "natural capital" for us to draw down at will.

Here's how we've done so far in "managing" the planet: between 10 per cent and 20 per cent of all species will be driven to extinction before 2050; only one-fifth of all original forests remain pristine and undisturbed (and, in the contiguous United States, 97 per cent of the native forest has been cut down); half of all forests (which originally covered almost half of Earth's land surface) are gone; 60 per cent of the world's coral reefs could be lost in the next twenty to forty years; more than 20 per cent of known freshwater fish species have become extinct; as much as 60 per cent of important fish stocks are at risk from overfishing; desertification and land degradation threaten nearly one-quarter of the globe's land surface; and IPCC scientists are warning of "abrupt and irreversible" climate change caused by humans. All this just for starters, most of it accomplished in just a few generations.

As report cards go, it's an F-minus, where even the best environmental clichés – think "nature always bats last" or "we all live downstream" – barely capture the implications of our behaviour. We've enacted supreme the law of unintended consequences. A few thousand years of civilisation have shown that neither the biosphere nor any part of it can be managed - certainly not by us and not for long.

A brief article in New Scientist lamenting the plight of wild tigers in India – estimates of their remaining numbers have recently been lowered by more than half due to habitat destruction and poaching – mentioned, in three of its four paragraphs, the need to better manage the situation. Even though past management practices have resulted in the current, alarmingly low numbers, authorities stubbornly believe that more "managing" would fix the problem. It wouldn't of course; all past attempts at managing our way out of self-inflicted ecological messes have backfired. Like trying to squirm out of quicksand, we've only ever succeeded at getting ourselves more deeply and desperately mired in the muck.

In another instance, some conservation scientists are floating the idea of "assisted migration." They're actually proposing to FedEx selected species of plants and animals to new latitudes, in hopes of giving them more time to adapt to the ravages of climate change. Many species won't be able to migrate fast enough to keep ahead of rising temperatures and changing patterns of precipitation. Like cavalry to the rescue, we'd try to manage the crisis – one we created in the first place. Kind of like calling in tobacco companies to tackle the lung cancer problem.

Meanwhile, we overlook the need to fundamentally change how our civilisation situates itself in the biosphere. We need an attitude adjustment, as it were – and realising we're not the boss would be a good place to start.

Submitted by Brian Mason, a writer and philosopher who lives in James Bay.

From The Boondocks: Where is Robin Hood?

By Ceritanne

Where was Robin Hood when The Sheriff of Nottingham rode into town and used taxpayer's money to fleece them over?

On February 29th, 2008 "Sheriff" Gordon Campbell rode into Nanaimo and took from the poor to give to the rich, announcing his government will provide the private non-profit Nanaimo Airport Commission \$6 Million towards the airports' planned runway expansion. Under his ever magnanimous wing, if lucky enough to be part of Nanaimo's business elite, Campbell waxed eloquent to slightly wacky,

"We're with the Nanaimo Airport on runway expansion, we can have a runway long enough to accept larger planes, but equally, we will provide lighting for reliability, so people can land---and they will land, and land, and land---we expect 100,000 more people a year using Nanaimo Airport." (Nanaimo News Bulletin)

Let's backtrack a bit in explanation of why taxpayers should be royally ticked off over this one.

Unless Canadians were really following closely, many missed the fact that airports are no longer owned and operated by the federal government Ministry of Transport. Canada embarked upon a policy of divesting airports from federal control to local management in 1992.

The National Airports Policy clearly confirmed the government's intention to withdraw from the business of operating airports and called for individual airports in the National Airports System to be "self-sufficient" within five years.

The 2005 Office of the Auditor General Report entitled, Transport Canada – Overseeing the National Airports System, under Background and Other Observations, Item 2.7 states:

"In 1992, Transport Canada began to transfer the major Canadian airports. By March 2003, the 26 NAS airports had been transferred: twenty-two to airport authorities, three to territorial governments, and one to a municipality."

What was the objective? The stated purpose was that:

airport authorities would be financially viable; and
airport authorities would operate at arm's length from government and without financial recourse to it.¹

In other words no public funding. In 2008, why is the Nanaimo Airport Commission behaving far less than "self-sufficient" and, in fact, heavily into the taxpayer's purse? And, why this sudden interest in expanding a small, regional airport in a less than ideal setting when there are three large international airports within a radius of 150 kilometers?

At a presentation in the community of South Wellington, Mike Hooper, CEO and Manager for the Nanaimo Airport Commission flat out told the attendees that certain people within Nanaimo (he refused to name names) came to him requesting airport expansion to facilitate the Nanaimo Convention Center.

The Nanaimo Airport Commission has also made application to the Island Coastal Economic Trust fund² to the tune of \$5 Million and, at an open house on January 14, 2008, Mr. Hooper, bald-faced stated that the Nanaimo Airport Commission would be seeking additional funding through "both the provincial and federal governments" as it proceeds into Phase II airport expansion with a total budget of \$27 Million, minus a business plan! Correction; a business plan of fleecing the residential taxpaying citizens living in the area!

Now, if all this isn't bad enough there are other aspects to airport expansion that, in this era of global warming, peak oil and the 100 Mile Diet, fly in the face of all reason and long-term planning. The Nanaimo Airport sits entirely surrounded by Agricultural Reserve Land overtop of the Cassidy Aquifer - one of the largest fresh water sources in the area.

In typical rules of contraire fashion, the City of Nanaimo commissioned a Report entitled, City of Nanaimo Water Resources Water Supply Strategic Plan which states under Section 6 Water Source Development, 6.2 Overview of Sources, "The presence of a potentially large groundwater aquifer, the Cassidy Aquifer, to the south of the City has been documented in past reports. The potential for a high quality, reasonable yield source makes groundwater an option that needs further consideration."

So, while on one hand the City of Nanaimo promotes the paving over of high quality Agriculture Reserve Land plus an aquifer for airport expansion, on the other they have been given advice to look to that same aquifer as a future source of water.

Back in the rural community, the residents of the area have been working to protect the Cassidy Aquifer from the ravages of further development. As far back as 1994 officials within the North Oyster District of the Cowichan Valley Regional District had recommended that the "Ministry of transportation and Highways consider, as part of its new Island Highway project, the purchase of industrial and/or commercial properties adjacent to the Island Highway which are located above the Cassidy Aquifer" and to "enact groundwater legislation." Consensus at that time was for further political action to protect the Aquifer.

Fourteen years later, with another government in power, there is still no legislated water protection. In advocating for protection of the Cassidy Aquifer through adequate legislation, local residents have been called "naysayers," NIMBYS and "selfish" by Nanaimoites who promote business as usual with more paving over the aquifer.

The final blow came in an end-run around consultation and due public process when Gordon Campbell "Sheriff of Nottingham" rode into town with bags of taxpayer's money for runway expansion over the aquifer.

There's no Robin Hood.

Sources:

¹ www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/DOMINO/REPORTS.NSF/html/0010ce.html

² www.islandcoastaltrust.ca/about_us.php

City Repair!!

"It was definitely the most people I've ever seen in the Fernwood Community Centre gym," said Fernwood NRG's Lisa Helps about an April presentation by Mark Lakeman. Others noted that no municipal councillors or mayors were in attendance.

Mark's from Portland's City Repair Project (cityrepair.org). He shared stories and images about reclaiming intersections (photo, above) and depaving (photo, right) - removing unnecessary asphalt and concrete from reduce stormwater runoff pollution of rivers, increasing the amount of land available for habitat restoration, urban farming, trees, native vegetation, and beauty in urban areas.

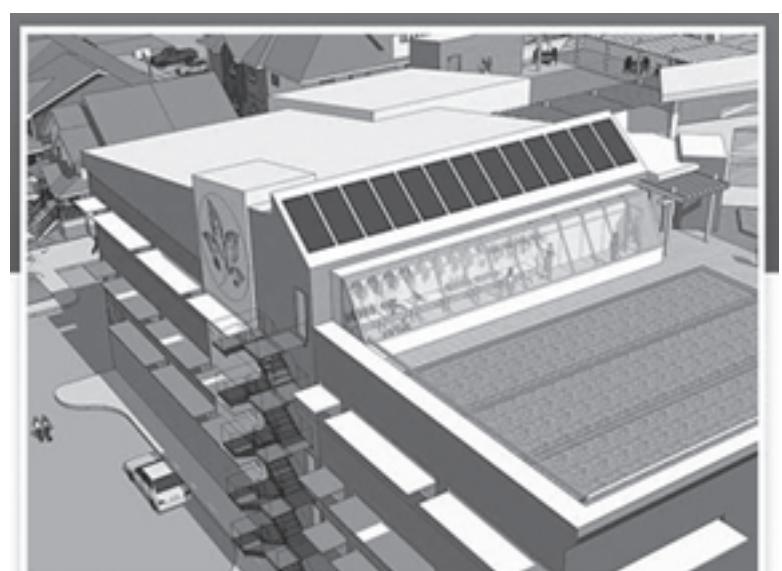
Beautiful !!



BC Works Best When We Say Union Yes

Saskatoon's Inner City Project

by Mark Bigland-Pritchard



The inner city project which had its funding axed by the Sk Party drew an excellent turnout for its support rally and walk today [Apr 5th]. I reckon there were over 1000 people, maybe way over, dunno. LOTS, anyway.

They hadn't booked the street, only the sidewalks, but the sidewalks were crowded during the walk, so people kept spilling out into the street, only to be shooed back by a growing number of police. Police on bicycle, foot, in cars. But all was peaceful and cordial. I reckon a good number of police are in favour of Station 20 West, too. They just saw to it that people didn't get run over.

A poor sound system unfortunately did not transfer the speaking parts of event far enough, but everyone was in good spirits and everyone knows what's going on, more or less, anyway. The walk definitely made an impact. Media were there.

I don't know if that area of the city has ever featured a march. Maybe we impressed the locals with our commitment to the cause of their community. Of course, some marchers would have been local to the area. Overall, I felt moved by the show of concern for inner city improvements. There definitely is broad based support for this project, evidently, and it won't die soon, I think. Hopefully, Premier Wall and company will come around.

For more information: station20west.org



Food Resources

9-10 CLUB (ST. ANDREW'S SOUP KITCHEN)

740 View St. Victoria, B.C. V8W 1J8 ph: 388-5571 8 - 10am seven days a week.
Church-run club providing daily meals on a drop-in basis.

ANAWIM COMPANION SOCIETY

973 Caledonia Street Victoria B.C. V8T 1E7 phone: 382-0283
Mon, Tues, Thurs 10am-5pm, Weds, Fri 10am-8pm, Sat 10am-4pm
Laundry, showers, meals, clothing, limited housing spaces.

COMMUNITY FOOD BANK

4-697 Goldstream Ave, 474-4443
Tues, Weds: 10am-3pm, closed last week of the month

ESQUIMALT COMMUNITY LUNCH

Esquimalt United Church Hall, Lyall St., just past Admirals Rd. Tues & Thurs noon-1:15

GOLDSTREAM FOOD BANK

761 Station Rd (Legion Basement), Langford, B.C. phone: 474-4443
3rd Tuesday, monthly at the basement of the Royal Canadian Legion.
Serving the Western Communities from View Royal to Metchosin

FOOD NOT BOMBS

A collectively run food kitchen. Ph: 383-5144, ext 1940
<http://users.resist.ca/~fnb-victoria>. A collectively run food kitchen.
Free vegetarian serving Sundays, 3 pm - Harris Green (Pandora & Vancouver)
Bring plastic containers for bowls, bags 4 produce.

FRUIT AND VEGGIE BOX

901 Kings Road, Victoria, B.C., V8T 1W5 Phone: 388-7696
Good Food Box Program - order \$5, \$10, or \$15 box of fresh fruit and vegetables at the beginning of the month and receive it in the middle of the month. Purchased in bulk. Order and pick up boxes @ BCC

JAMES BAY COMMUNITY SCHOOL

140 Oswego Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 2B1 phone: 389-1470
Seniors Dinners on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 5 PM - \$5.75
Community Dinners Weds, approx. every other month., usually \$4 & \$2 -12 & under.
Tickets must be purchased at the centre in advance
Community school cafe open Mon - Fri 11:45 am -12:30 pm. \$3.25 & child 2.75.

JAMES BAY COMMUNITY PROJECT

547 Michigan Street, Victoria BC. V8V 1S5 (250) 388-7844, email: askus@jbcp.bc.ca
Hours Monday to Friday 8:00am-4:00pm

MEALS ON WHEELS

For residents of Greater Victoria who, because of age, disability or illness, are unable to prepare an adequate meal for themselves, have inadequate cooking facilities, have no one to prepare meals, or have health and social needs. Referrals from doctors, health & Social Services agencies, concerned friends, family, or personal requests. Current cost of meals- \$6.75. In addition to nutritional benefits, some social interaction. 479-6900

MUSTARD SEED STREET CHURCH

www.mustardseed.ca

625 Queens Avenue, Victoria, B.C., V8T 1L9 Phone: 250-953-1575
Service for families: Monday, Wednesday, & Friday 9 AM - 2 PM
Service for couples and singles: Thursday 9 AM - 2 PM

OUR PLACE

919 Pandora Ave., Victoria, BC V8V 3P4, Phone: 250-388-7112
9am - 5pm Monday to Friday, closed weekends; showers & laundry 9-3:30
lunch - 11:30 am-12:30 pm; dinner - 4-5 pm
Victoria's 'Living Room' - a drop in centre with computer room, printers, special projects, tea & coffee, singing Wednesdays with Louise Rose.

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY

101-831 Yates Street, Victoria, BC V8W 1M1 Phone: 250- 382-2767
9 am-12:30 pm, 1:30 pm-4:30 pm Mon-Friday, Tues aft for Women
Must be 19 yrs, unless referred by parents, ASK, or Soc Services. Food, clothing, household items. Home visits, food vouchers for parents w/children.

SAINT SAVIOUR'S KITCHEN

310 Henry Street, Church Hall (VicWest) phone: 384-8773
Rainbow Kitchen for everyone, Weds, Thurs, Fris, 12 noon 1:30 pm
Shelter Weds-Sat nights, arrive 9-10 pm: mats, blankets, often food. Space for 25-35.

SALVATION ARMY

Family Services and Counselling (singles, too) 2695 Quadra St 250-386-8521
Monday Friday, 9 am - 3:30 pm Emergency food hampers, clothing & small house wares vouchers. Extra shelter space only available in subzero temperatures.

SIKH TEMPLE

1210 Topaz Avenue, Victoria, V8T 2N1: (towards summit park), enter right side door
250-383-5443 Every Sunday at noon - Free food serving, lentil dahl and chapatis, etc.

STREETLINK EMERGENCY SHELTER

1634 Store St., Victoria, B.C. V8W 1S2 Phone: 383-1951, office 383-1951
Free dinner 7 days a week, 3 pm for meal ticket, serving at 3:30

ST. JOHN THE DIVINE

1611 Quadra St., Victoria, B.C., V8W 2L5 phone: 383 7169
Food bank open Tues & Fridays, 10 am-noon, in church basement. (Closed Fri and Tuesday after Welfare Wednesday, and Tuesdays after Monday stat.)

VICTORIA NATIVE FRIENDSHIP CENTRE

231 Regina Avenue, Victoria, BC V8Z 1J6, 250-384-3211
Wholesale prices, various size boxes. Pay first, pick up following wk.

Good Food Box Program - Duncan area - 250-746-4204, www.providence.bc.ca.

Breakfast Club

First Saturday: St. Andrew's Presbyterian Hall, 680 Courtney St, 8-10 am

Second Saturday: St. Andrew's Presbyterian Hall, 680 Courtney St, 8-10 am

Third Saturday: Glad Tidings Pentecostal Church Hall, 1800 Quadra St. 8-10

Fourth Saturday: Central Baptist Church, 833 Pandora, 8-10 am; 385-7786

Fifth Saturday: BC Ferry Workers' Union at St. Andrew's Hall, 8-10 am

DAY WORKERS FOR HIRE

We provide dependable labour for the odd jobs that arise in your home, office, or business. All wages go directly to the workers.

101-749 Pandora, 388-9296

Housing Resources

No Cost for Service, Time Limited Stay

Salvation Army (Emerg men only) 525 Johnson Street, 384-3396

Streetlink 1634 Store Street, 383-1951

Sandy Merriman House (for women) 809 Burdett Avenue, 480-1408

Sobering & Assessment Ctr (24 hr) 1125 Pembroke (@ Cook) 213-4444

Out of the Rain (Youth 15-25) 812-0490 winter only, various locations

Kiwanis Youth Shelter (13-18) 2117 Vancouver St., 386-8282

Hill House - Women with children 479-3963

Sooke Transition House 642-2591 Women with or without children

Vic. Women's Transition House 385-6611 Women with or w/out kids

Cridge Centre for the Family 1190 Kings Rd 386-7291 Women & kids

Kiwanis House for single women 16-29 w/ one child 382-1004

Margaret Laurence House 995-0058 Women & kids escaping abuse

Low Cost Monthly Rentals

CLOSED: YWCA Women's Residence - 880 Courtney Street, 386-7511

Ritz Hotel - 710 Fort Street, 381-1868

Fairfield Hotel - 710 Cormorant St., 386-1621

York Hotel - 711 Johnson Street, 385-2544

Douglas Hotel - 1450 Douglas Street, 383-4157

Ocean Island Backpackers - 791 Pandora Avenue 385-1788

Turtle Refuge Backpackers - 1608 Quadra Street 386-4471

Vic. Human Exchange Soc. 361- 2762, 1-800-691-9366, www.humanx.org

Extreme Outreach - men only, \$350 + dep. No alcohol or drugs. 708-2064

Subsidized and/or Supported Housing Services

BC Housing (subsidized - low income families, 55+, or w/disabilities)

301-3440 Douglas Street, 475-7550 www.bchousing.org

Burnside Gorge Community Assoc. 388-5251 members.shaw.ca/bgca

Capital Region Housing (subsidized, low income families, 55+, disabilities)

623 Fisgard, 388-6422 www.crd.bc.ca/housing

Coordinated Housing Registry (subsidized & supported housing)

www.coalaid.org 826 Cormorant St. 356-2548

M'Akola Housing Society 384-1423

Pacifica Housing Advisory Assoc. (families) 827 Fisgard 385-2131

Pacifica Housing Serv/Downtown Outreach Serv (connects low-income folk w/ housing in private sector) 826 Cormorant 356-2555

Pandora Youth Apts 753 Pandora, For 15-19 yrs, Andrea - 380-2663

St. Vincent de Paul Soc. 382-2767 www.svdpvictoria.com/services/

Victoria Senior Citizen Housing Society - Please register with the Housing Registry at the BC Housing Management Commission: 301-3440 Douglas 250.475.7550

Some Housing Searches on the Internet

BC Housing Subsidized Housing List

www.bchousing.org

Brown Bros. Property Management

www.brownbros.com

BC Co-Operative Housing

www.chf.bc.ca/

Camosun Off Campus Housing List

<http://www.myidealhome.com/ccss>

David Burr Property Management

www.davidburr.com

Off Campus Housing for students

housing.uvic.ca/ads/index.php

www.homes4students.ca

Helpful Housing Hints

1. Add your name to the BC Housing list.

2. Add your name to the Coordinated Housing Registry.

3. Get the addresses & phone numbers of subsidized or supported housing units from the Cool Aid Society, the BGCA, M'Akola, etc. If you find one you like, make friends, impress them, ask them to pull your name off the list. They can let you in, but you have to be listed with BC Housing first.

Some places to call for help

Action Committee of People with Disabilities - 926 View St., 383-4105

Adult Addiction Comm. Treatment Serv: 2nd floor, 1250 Quadra, 727-3544

AIDS Vancouver Island: 1601 Blanshard St., 384-2366

Alano Club: 1402 Broad St, 383-9151

Alcoholics Anon: #8, 2020 Douglas, 383-7744 (help), 383-0415 (off)

Cool-Aid Medical Clinic: 385-1466

Cool-Aid Phone Message Service (\$5/mth): 383-1977

Credit Counselling - 477-9998

Foundation of Support of Recovery for Men: 480-1342

HomelessNation.org - online community - 130-3 pm, Wednesdays, 755 Pandora

Grief/Bereavement Counsel: Lorraine Jasmin, R.P.C., 1198 Goldstream, sliding scale

Lalli Care Clinic - Drug Info, Med. Review, Alt Health - 386-5100, www.lallicareclinic.ca

Men's Trauma Centre: 381-6367, #203-1420 Quadra St. www.menstrauma.ca

Outreach Services Methadone Clinic: 2004 Fernwood Rd., 480-1232

Problem Gambling Help Line - 1-888-795-6111

Prostitute Empowerment & Education (PEERS): 744 Fairview Rd., 388-5325

Research, Education, Evaluation, & Support Prog. (REES): 595-8619

Salvation Army Addictions & Rehab Centre: 525 Johnson, 384-3396

Seniors' Advocacy Group - 388-7696 for advise; 360-1068 to be an advocate



Pacifying the Public

by
Charmaine
White Face ©

The USDA Forest Service from Custer National Forest out of Billings, MT, is responsible for a large area in the Northwestern corner of South Dakota. The Cave Hills and Slim Buttes area exhibits some of the most unique and beautiful landscapes in the state. This area also was used extensively in the 1960s for uranium mining, ...open-pit uranium mining. Unfortunately, at that time, there were no laws for reclamation, so 89 mines and prospects were left abandoned, according to information from the US Forest Service.

On Nov. 13, 2007, in the nearest community to the Cave Hills area, a blink of an eye place known as Ludlow, the Forest Service held an open house "to update the public on the activities happening at the site." It was advertised in the regions' daily newspaper a few times, and flyers were sent to interested individuals.

There is a federal law called the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act, or CERCLA. The Forest Service has a CERCLA program that "cleans up hazardous substances from abandoned mine lands and other sites to protect human health and the environment (such as watershed soil, water, and vegetation)." This sounds excellent, however, the Forest Service can only do this if they have enough money, or there is a Potentially Responsible Party. In this case, the Potentially Responsible Party is Tronox Worldwide LLC, formerly Kerr-McGee Corporation, which mined at least six of the bluffs in the North Cave Hills area at the Riley Pass site.

More than 150 acres were disturbed from 1962-64 when Tronox pushed a million plus cubic yards of overburden over the edges of the rimrocks surrounding the plateau at the Riley Pass site, spewing radioactive dust and destroying hundreds of petroglyphs, burials and sites sacred to many Native American nations. From these activities more than 28,000 tons of ore was removed which produced 150,000 pounds of uranium. The wastes left behind included poisonous arsenic, molybdenum which harms cattle, and the highly radioactive thorium, not to mention other uranium decay products such as radium, and radon. The radon gas alone, at that time and today, is carried for hundreds of miles in the air and causes lung cancer.

With the release of all these radioactive substances into the environment for more than 40 years, the Forest Service reached a settlement agreement with Tronox who is developing reclamation plans only for Bluff B. One of the disturbing statements used in the 38 page settlement agreement was: "Respondent shall prepare, perform and submit to the Forest Service for review and approval the non-time critical removal action ..." Probably after more than 40 years of allowing these radioactive contaminants to harm the environment, including the human beings downwind and down stream, then it seems to be "non-time critical." Yet, it would seem that the clean-up would be 'more' time critical in order to stop the environmental and human health effects as soon as possible.

Bluff B was chosen since tests have shown it contains the highest amount of gamma radiation. This is the deadliest form of nuclear radiation in comparison with alpha and beta radiation which is also found at the Riley Pass site. The material containing the most gamma radiation will be scooped up into "containment cells." In other

words, this radioactive material will be wrapped up like a burrito in a manmade synthetic wrapper. How long the wrapper will hold the material remains to be seen, since uranium can take billions of years to decay eventually to its non-radioactive final self while the wrapper will fall apart long before the uranium is finished. The reclamation plans are only for one bluff at the Riley Pass site. This raises the question, what about the other 88 mines? Are all 89 mines going to be reclaimed? Or is only one bluff of one mine going to be reclaimed?

When I asked this question of Laurie Walters-Clark, the USFS On-Scene Coordinator, she quickly deflected the question and never gave an answer. However, there is another entity watching this whole course of action, a Quality Assurance body called Millennium Science and Engineering, Inc. Maybe it's because they are the watchdog that I was able to get a more honest answer. To the question of: "When will all 89 mines be cleaned up?" The answer from MSE was: "Not in your lifetime."

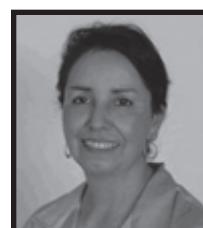
It wasn't an answer I wanted to hear. I kept thinking of all the people in the village of Bullhead, 100 miles away, who are downstream from these mines. I kept thinking of the abandoned mines just west of the Pine Ridge Reservation. I kept thinking of all the people in South Dakota affected by the radioactive dust and radon gas as the winds blow across this northwest corner to the rest of the state. The answer was an honest answer and one that treated me like an intelligent, responsible adult. Millennium Science and Engineering, Inc, should be proud that they have employees who are not afraid to give an honest answer.

After going through the large amount of written material made available on the plan, my conclusion was that this massive amount of paperwork is only a "pacifier for the public." It is an insult to the courage and the right of the people living downwind and downstream from these mines to be duped into believing that the situation is being remedied when work will only be completed on one bluff of one mine with the result of that work not guaranteed.

People have the right to know when something harmful is, or has been coming to them. With the proper information, then choices can be made to remain and take chances with the 'known' danger, to move to a different location, or to do something to help lessen the danger.

It is estimated that there are more than 1,000 abandoned uranium mines located in this region which also includes the southern Black Hills in South Dakota, parts of Montana, and a major portion of Wyoming. How much radioactive dust has been carried by the wind from all these mines in the past 40 years? How much radioactive runoff from 40 years of rain and snow has collected in the Missouri River? What will it take to wake up the country and the world to this deadly "silent Chernobyl" in the middle of the United States?

Charmaine White Face, (Zumila Wobaga) is a member of the Oglala Tetuwan, a former college instructor, writer, and coordinator for Defenders of the Black Hills. This article is reprinted with permission,



Dear Couz, by Jennifer Hastie

Yes, Couz, I know that a liberal MLA made "shocking comments" about Residential Schools on March 13, 2008. Who finds his attitude shocking? Like, what else is new, Couz? This attitude is the prevailing attitude of many people in our society toward First Nations Peoples.

What on earth makes you think that he "should know what he is talking about?" Just because he lives up north where there are lots of natives? Just because his daughter teaches native kids? Couz, many people "who should know better" are racists at heart.

The only shocking thing that I can find about all of this is that man doesn't see the connection between losing parenting skills and the Residential School system. He has merely put the cart before the horse: he needs to realize that the Residential School system came first; THEN came the problem with parenting skills.

The Residential School system tried to decimate the native culture; no one who knows the impact of that system would dispute that fact. Then, add depression to the problem, and you've just about got it. How would you like to have all your kids taken away from you, sometimes suddenly, sometimes forbidding your children to go home even during summer holidays.

And what are the lessons being taught to the children at the Residential Schools? Don't even think about that one, the physical punishment, the sexual abuse, the demeaning work in the laundry when they should be, at least, learning academic stuff.

What is culture all about if it isn't about teaching our kids how we do things? We pass cultural values and teachings down to our children through our parenting. If our parents didn't have an opportunity to learn good parenting skills from their parents, then we, as their children, cannot learn good parenting skills either.

I remember what I learned about culture from a sociology professor at the big school: "culture is whatever it is that you usually do." Yes, it is a very simplified definition—hey, Couz, we may have been a particularly dense group of students! As well, I recall a line from a Roger Waters' (the original Pink Floyd writer) song that said: "...but the monkey's not listening; he's back in the kitchen answering the phone." I believe that Roger Waters actually used the word "looking," but you get my point, eh, Couz.

Okay, this leads me to your final question: What happens when a person doesn't get respect? Well, certainly I can't speak for all people; however, one thing is for sure, not being respected is one of the worst "downers" you can have. When people feel really down, they often end up very angry or very depressed. In fact, those two emotions are two sides of the same coin.

What do people do when they feel angry or depressed? Well, how many times have you heard a friend say: "Ooh, I've had such a hard day; pour me a drink...." Hey, Couz, the bars are full of them. Also, today drugs are freely available...."Ooh, I've had a such hard day, get me my Prozac, please..." Can you imagine how losing your children could result in the same kind of depression, only much worse?

So, you say, so many natives cannot be respected for their lifestyle today. Nope, Couz, I don't buy that one. First of all, there are many natives who do not drink. You just "don't notice" them. Second, there are many people who are having the very same problem with depression, but they are totally non-native.

You say that there are immigrants here from non-white countries who also face racism. Yes, that is true, except for one huge difference: they can always go back home again. There is still a place where their original culture survives.

Where is home for our First Nations Peoples? What happens to those cultures if they are decimated by us? It's a very different story for our Native Peoples than for the immigrant. When their culture goes, their sense of identity goes too. No wonder Native Land Claims are such a big issue.

Finally, our Native Peoples were unprepared for all the immigration in the last 200 years. In fact, they even welcomed us until we began to take advantage of their wonderful hospitality. Taking advantage of someone is NOT being respectful to them.

On the bright side: that wonderful hospitality still exists today, but it is mostly on reserve--unless, of course, you just happen to strike up a conversation with a native in our part of the world and he feels like giving you some respect. That might not happen, but it could happen... especially if you show him or her, right from the start, that you are genuine and that you see them as any other person. It means a smile, a comment on the weather, and perhaps, "...how're ya doin'." Is that really so hard to do?

STREET MUZINGS

the beauty of skid row

under the Midnight Mission
moon on my tongue i
hand a twenty over
to two street urchins perched
pre-flight
at the corner
of Doug
and Pandora
and i tell 'em " don't
waste it
on food" smiling
i seem to think
i'm much smarter
than i am as
the doser's pound veins
into canyons, valley's
pimps pound
girl holes
into coin slots i
begin to get
sick under
that same moon
puke moving along cardboard
nylon tent street-
side housing project, rain
sleet come like slug
cooked drugs and Gallo
wine empties bring
up the rats binging
the gnats the lice the waste
litter
this wet concrete pillow and
the dull gray
under my feet sucks
up the light
off the lives
it eats
to reflect.

j. fisher



Hey there, stranger
can you spare me a dime?
It's nine in the morning,
gotta start saving up for
the midnight bottle of wine.
My eyes feel sad, puffy and sore
bloodshot they are
and here the sun's so bright
from way, way up there.
You walk by so fast
glaring down at me
with a swift glance
I really feel like dying inside.
Can you give me just a chance?
I'm just sittin' on my butt
on cold, hard cement
smoking a nasty cigarette
don't even own a pillow or blanket.
It's here I pay my rent.
Days fall into nights,
night into day
What's the friggin' use of a watch
when it's time for me
to drift away?
I think of a better day ahead
If only you could
feel - My warm heart.
If only you could,
know. Me as Me.
Stranger, I was once like you
before life really screwed me.
So,
stranger, stranger
Can you spare me just one more dime?
It's just one more step towards
that midnight bottle of wine.

by Lynn Molholm, March 08



WALK 4 JUSTICE

Advocates for missing and murdered women, human rights activists, and concerned citizens will be walking across Canada in June to draw attention to missing and murdered Native women, children and men.

"We want to honor the women, men and children and the families of the ones who have disappeared over the last, at least, four decades. We want to speak out for them and the children who were left behind to fend for themselves."

If you are interested in supporting this walk for justice, please email walk4justice@yahoo.ca or rose@homelessnation.org.

We need family members of the victims, men, women, children, singers, drummers, walkers, volunteers, fundraisers, cooks, vehicles, drivers and much much more!



Can I help the next
she asked leaving
person in line to the side
at Walgreens as if we are all
with our tampons and toothbrushes
perpetually next
her never-ending shift
person only when she leaves
home to perhaps a mother or a son
who love her

NEXT

His sign it had a double meaning
at least
no place like home
it said he visibly indigent standing
on the median between
left and right traffic flowing
panhandling I thought
so I gave him a buck as I crossed
and he fell into step beside me
I was on tv
last night he says
bring the troops home rally
there were 500 of us
white van with the camera on top
it got me
guess what my sign said
no place like home?
the troops they have families –
sons, wives
I wanted to ask if he'd fought in
Vietnam
but introduced myself instead
Scotty he offered as we walked
no place
like home
an awkward simile

Lisa Helps, March 2008



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survey team explore
the village. More
info at IngmarLee.com

Forever Warriors

Crumbling ancient morality
Lost, over-run by ambiguity
Crusaders bringing home
Their hatred and causes
Lost in desert sands
Wishing only to go home
And praying to heal
Somewhere down this dirty path

Why is home so different
I am still loved
Bug frightened too
That all my wishes and dreams
Will end up
Loading my gun, in another run
For a goal so mistaken
And perhaps calling
For my sons

Tell me once more
That the bugles push us on
To glory, a place in the sun
No more pain
A little medal
To end the nightmare
That I'll carry with me forever.

West Mundy, July 2007

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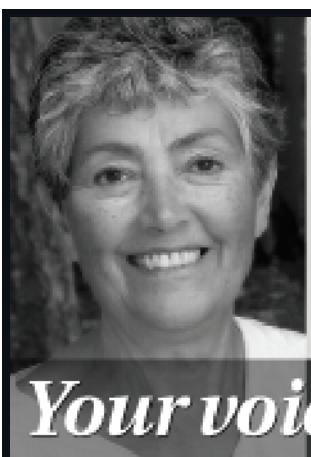
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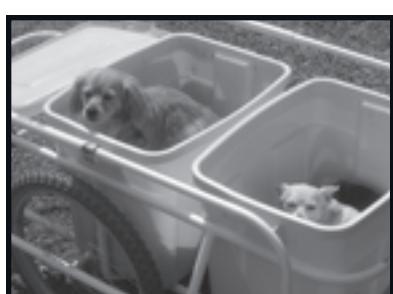
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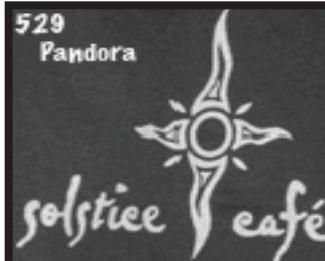
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Rob Fleming, MLA
Victoria - Hillside

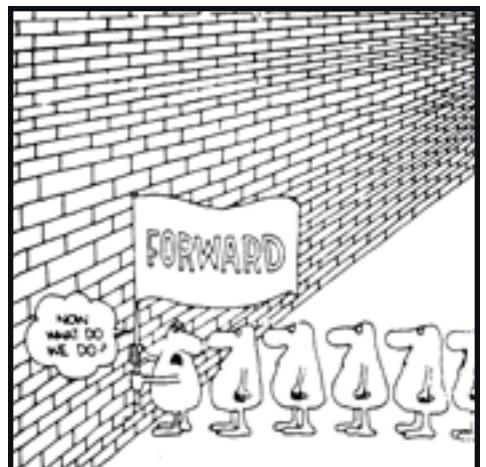
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